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## Great Britain in French Policy Conceptions at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919

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### ABSTRACT

During the First World War, France and Britain forged the most intimate and comprehensive political, economic, and military alliance in history. The contributions of Britain and its Empire had been vital to France's survival as a Great Power. A continuation of the wartime *Entente* was therefore pivotal to a wider strategy of embedding French security in a trans-Atlantic community of democratic Powers including the United States. But neither Britain nor the United States were ready to commit to using force to uphold the European order established at Paris. British political and policy elites reverted to pre-war cultural reflexes that prioritised Imperial considerations and assumed that France posed the chief threat to British interests.

The bitter experience of the Great War drove home the vital strategic importance of Britain to France. The manpower, maritime strength, industrial production, and raw materials of Britain, its Empire, and Dominions had been pivotal to victory in 1918. Paris judged British power vital to all projects to contain Germany after the fighting ceased. For this reason, continuing some form of the wartime alliance with Britain remained an absolute necessity in all French planning for peace after 1918.<sup>1</sup> The great challenge for the French was that British policy makers did not share this vision. British elite and popular opinion opposed the idea of future military interventions on the continent. British post-war priorities were instead Imperial consolidation and European economic and political recovery, the latter aim presuming the relatively swift re-integration of Germany into the international economy. Another important factor was a current of “Atlanticism” in British policy during the Peace Conference. This was based in part on cultural affinities between Britain and the United States, the world's two English-speaking Great Powers. But it rested more fundamentally on a widely shared conviction that Britain's interests were best served by close co-operation with President Woodrow Wilson's

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Administration.<sup>2</sup> A traditional military alliance with France was not compatible with British conceptions of post-war international order.

Military alliances of the pre-1914 variety also ran against increasingly powerful international norms that favoured multilateral and internationalist responses to the problems of peace and security. Traditional power politics had been widely—although by no means universally—discredited in the international public sphere. Enormously popular with the French public, Wilson’s call for “a new and more wholesome diplomacy” and creating a “universal association of nations” reached an unprecedented global audience.<sup>3</sup> The death and destruction wrought by the war created a fertile environment for internationalist ideas in general and Wilson’s public calls for a new approach to world politics in particular. French policy at the Peace Conference was an adaptation of traditional security priorities to the realities of the post-war international environment. As a traditional bi-lateral alliance with Britain and America was not available, the government of Georges Clemenceau pursued a trans-Atlantic post-war international order. At its heart would be close co-operation amongst the world’s three most powerful democracies: France, Britain, and the United States.

This process of adaptation has not received the attention it deserves in the existing literature. English-language historiography has long tended to interpret French policy as having been based on pre-1914 practices of the balance of power and exclusive alliances. The earliest articulation of this view emerged before the ink dried on the Treaty of Versailles. In what remains the most influential book ever written about the Peace Conference, John Maynard Keynes depicted Clemenceau as a “French Bismarck.”<sup>4</sup> French policy, he argued, aimed at destroying German power and constructing old-fashioned alliances with Britain and other Powers to keep Germany down. Keynes’s judgements have played a central role in shaping the English-language literature on the Conference ever since.<sup>5</sup> French historians have tended to offer more nuanced interpretations alive to the ideological dimension to French policy in 1919.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the trans-Atlantic conception underpinning the Clemenceau government’s approach does not figure prominently even in the most recent literature. A close look at the evolution of policy deliberations in Paris, and in particular the role of Britain in those deliberations, provides a new perspective on peace making and the dynamics of Franco-British relations at this crucial juncture.

# I

The importance of Britain, its Empire, and Dominions to France’s war effort had grown steadily over the course of the Great War. During the opening phase, the British Expeditionary Force played a pivotal role in turning the initial German attack into northern France. In the months that followed, the scale of Britain’s military commitment increased dramatically from just over 900,000 in late 1915 to nearly 1.4 million one year later and

over 1.8 million by autumn 1917.<sup>7</sup> Just as significant was the contribution of British sea power. The Royal Navy contained the German High Seas Fleet, protected shipping lanes vital to the Allied war effort, and imposed an ever-more-suffocating blockade on the Central Powers. France depended on the British merchant marine for more than one-half of the imports required to maintain war production and feed its population.<sup>8</sup> Britain's position as the world's leading creditor was vital in securing foreign loans necessary to sustain its war effort: By late 1916, having contracted a debt of 7.8 billion francs to Britain, France was almost completely dependent on British credit to finance increasingly vast war purchases in the United States.<sup>9</sup>

British power was indispensable to France's ability to wage the Great War. It is impossible, however, to disentangle the importance attached by French officials to Britain from that they attributed to the United States. This is particularly true in the economic realm. France contracted huge war loans in America, mainly via the British Treasury. After entering the war, the Americans contributed vast resources to a range of inter-Allied institutions established to co-ordinate the Allied economic war effort: the Allied Wheat Executive, Inter-Allied Supplies Council, and Inter-Allied Maritime Transport Council. Allied pooled shipping and the distribution of raw materials, foodstuffs, and industrial production was rationalised in an increasingly effective system of economic co-ordination.<sup>10</sup> The structure and activities of these trans-Atlantic institutions provided a model for French planning for post-war economic security.

Imperial Russia's collapse in 1917 only compounded French dependence on Britain and the United States. Since its inception in 1894, the Franco-Russian Alliance had provided French policy with a traditional "eastern counter-weight" to German power. It forced Germany to wage a two-front war after 1914 and thereafter provided French policy with a measure of independence from Britain. The fall of the tsar and the advent of the Bolshevik regime in 1917 deprived France of this important source of strategic and diplomatic support. Planning was underway to replace the Russian alliance with close partnerships with "Successor States" in Central-Eastern Europe, but virtually all officials involved recognised that any "eastern system" could not supplant Imperial Russia in the European balance of power.<sup>11</sup>

British support for French security on the continent was therefore central to every post-war plan elaborated by French policy makers after 1918. But there were formidable cultural and political obstacles to a close post-war relationship. Long centuries of imperial and continental rivalry weighed heavily on mutual Franco-British perceptions. Subjective constructions of the past and stereotypes concerning national character lay at the heart of these perceptions. French political and policy elites tended to attribute the qualities of cynicism, selfishness, insularity, and materialism to Britain's national character. British international policy was widely represented as

motivated by self-interest and material gain.<sup>12</sup> These national qualities were typically juxtaposed with the selfless principles and universal ideals underpinning France's role in the world. The nineteenth-century French historian, Jules Michelet, characterised Britain as "anti-France" and the political, moral, and cultural "negation" of all that gave French character its "grandeur."<sup>13</sup>

Negative French constructions of Britain's character were mirrored in interesting ways across the Channel. Dominant British images of the French were of a frivolous, corrupt, unstable, and untrustworthy people.<sup>14</sup> Some historians have argued that a "British" identity first emerged as a galvanising force within the context of Britain's global struggle with France during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>15</sup> Stereotypes based on perceived differences in national character were perhaps most powerful in the Imperial context. The British army officer, Mark Sykes, who negotiated a colonial agreement with the French, judged French officers and administrators "incapable of commanding respect" because "they are not sahibs, they have no gentlemen, the officers have no horses, or guns, or dogs."<sup>16</sup>

One of the most persistent and powerful tropes on both sides of the Channel was that of a "natural rivalry," making long-term co-operation all but impossible. The legacy of enmity between France and Britain has shaped perceptions and policy making for centuries. Before the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, Napoleon Bonaparte closed a missive to the French naval commander by appealing to his "hatred for that power that has been oppressing us for forty generations."<sup>17</sup> Nearly a century later, even as relations gradually improved, leading to the signature of the *Entente Cordiale*, British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury hoped for "at best a mutual temper of apathetic tolerance" between two Powers that were "not naturally inclined to live together peaceably."<sup>18</sup>

During the Great War, Britain and France were able to put aside legacies of rivalry to co-ordinate their war efforts. The result was a remarkable strategic partnership that culminated in forging extensive and intimate intelligence-sharing arrangements, creating a unified command in spring 1918 and victory the following November.<sup>19</sup> Yet, with the Armistice barely signed, soon-to-be foreign secretary Lord Curzon could observe to the Cabinet:

We have been brought, for reasons of national safety, into an alliance with the French, but history shows that their national character is different from ours... . I am afraid that the Great Power from whom we most have to fear in the future is France.<sup>20</sup>

The permanent undersecretary at the Foreign Office, Lord Hardinge, echoed this assessment some months later. "It must be remembered," he warned:

until a century ago, France was England's historic and natural enemy, and that real friendship between the inhabitants of the two countries has always been very

difficult owing to differences of language, mentality and national character. These differences are not likely to decrease.<sup>21</sup>

Subjective constructions of the past weighed heavily on British understandings and anticipations in 1919. Four and one-half years of common struggle had not erased centuries of national and imperial rivalry.

Policy making in both London and Paris was shaped by the normative environment in which it took place. Two increasingly influential norms played an important role in shaping British policy prescriptions at the close of the war. Often referred to nowadays as “self-determination,” the first was more often described at the time as “the nationality principle.” A widely circulated Foreign Office memorandum on the question of “peace terms: observed that, “No peace can be satisfactory to this country unless it promises to be durable, and an essential condition of such a peace is that it should give full scope to national aspirations as far as practicable.”<sup>22</sup> The principle of self-determination was inseparable from the broader norm of democracy promotion. If British—and French—officials were more reluctant than their American counterparts to link explicitly self-determination and democracy, they did not deny the connexion between them. A second influential norm was support for constructing an international organisation to promote peace and co-operation amongst states. This support increased steadily over the course of the war within civil society as well as amongst political elites.<sup>23</sup>

Imperial priorities were equally fundamental in shaping British perspectives on the post-war order. After 1914, consensus existed amongst British policy elites about destroying German naval power so that it could no longer pose any threat to Britain’s global interests. The government of David Lloyd George focused increasingly on acquiring former Ottoman and German colonies and obtaining conditions under which the Royal Navy could best ensure the security of the British Empire.<sup>24</sup> There was no enthusiasm in Britain for ambitious territorial adjustments aimed at transforming the European balance. An outline of British “peace terms” by two senior Foreign Office officials in 1916 recommended that Britain resist “any attempt on the part of France to incorporate any considerable extent of German territory on the plea of strategical exigencies.”<sup>25</sup>

The British had taken part in Allied planning to create anti-German post-war trading blocs at the Allied Economic Conference in London in 1916. Lloyd George had also promised that the peace settlement would force Germany to pay for the costs of the war and prevent it from damaging British industry by dumping cheap manufactures on the British market. Still, Germany had been Britain’s second-largest trading partner before 1914, and by late 1918, British policy makers leaned increasingly towards a strategy of re-integrating Germany into the world economy as quickly as possible to

stimulate European and especially British recovery.<sup>26</sup> This strategy complemented the increasing priority attributed to Anglo-American co-operation in British policy. Wilson had stated clearly that a swift return to pre-war free trade practices was the best means to restore the world economy after the vagaries of the Great War.<sup>27</sup> British officials in London and Washington liaised ever more closely with their American counterparts over questions of post-war political and economic order during the second half of 1918. An American envoy sent to Europe in 1918 to study Allied peace preparations received a warm welcome in London and met with a wide range of British officials involved in peace planning in a trend that would broaden and deepen in the weeks to come. He was surprised, however, that similar co-operation did not seem to be taking place between the British and French. He observed instead “a noticeable attitude of suspicion and even distrust between London and Paris regarding preparations for the eventual peace.”<sup>28</sup>

French responses to the post-war normative environment differed from British responses in important ways. Support for a League or “Society” of Nations was more limited in France and concentrated on the left of the French political spectrum.<sup>29</sup> Policy elites expressed frustration with their counterparts across the Channel. General Victor Huguot, the chief French liaison officer to the British army during the war, lamented “profound insularity” in the British people and their “splendid and tranquil selfishness.”<sup>30</sup> Paul Cambon, who by 1919 had served as France’s ambassador at London for 20 years, criticised what he saw as the persistent short-sightedness of Britain’s international policy: “It is childish to make long-range policy,” he complained, “with people who dislike hypotheses and live only for the present.”<sup>31</sup> Cambon had long lamented the “lack of foresight, the true characteristic of [the British] people.”<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, discussion of France’s security priorities remained focused firmly on the continent. The legacies of past imperial rivalry did not alter convictions that France required a close relationship with Britain. Much less inclined than their British counterparts to invoke history as a guide to future Franco-British relations, French policy makers aimed instead to integrate British power into a French conception of a new European and international order. This conception would prove flexible enough to adapt to British policy requirements.

## II

Premier Clemenceau made all of the key decisions concerning France’s negotiating strategy in close consultation with a small team of trusted collaborators that included the industrialist, Louis Loucheur, Georges Mandel, and André Tardieu. Parliament and leading political figures, including President Raymond Poincaré, found themselves marginalised from decision making and only advised on the state of negotiations sporadically. Even Clemenceau’s Cabinet remained at arm’s length from key deliberations.<sup>33</sup> The most influential of Clemenceau’s inner circle was the journalist,



politician, former diplomat, and soldier, Tardieu. After volunteering in 1914, he saw frontline service before appointment to General—later Marshal—Ferdinand Foch's staff. In 1917, he became France's high commissioner to New York after America entered the war as an "Associated Power." In this capacity, he reported directly to the premier. Like Clemenceau, Tardieu spoke English fluently and possessed an extensive network of contacts in both Britain and America.<sup>34</sup> He returned from his American posting convinced that France's best hope for future security was a close relationship with the "Anglo-Saxon" Powers. In early December, Clemenceau tasked him with bringing together the policy recommendations of various policy actors into a coherent peace programme. Consulting closely with the premier, Tardieu drew on the material gathered from the Foreign Ministry, the army and naval general staffs, the civilian *Comité d'études*, and informal contacts amongst industrialists and civil society more broadly.<sup>35</sup>

Three other figures were influential in developing French security policy at the Peace Conference. Since mid-1917, the commerce minister, Étienne Clémentel, had worked with his advisor, Henri Hauser, to develop a post-war economic and commercial strategy based on close co-operation amongst the three liberal Great Powers. Clémentel's vision of future economic security extended well beyond the realm of commerce to embrace questions of war debts and reparations. His voice was prominent during the early phase of conference preparations. As negotiations evolved, Loucheur's influence replaced that of Clémentel.<sup>36</sup> Philippe Berthelot was the most influential permanent official within the Foreign Ministry. A long-time figure within the Quai d'Orsay's central administration, he combined a formidable intellect, an enormous capacity for hard work, and a dominant personality. Berthelot had earned the trust of Clemenceau's foreign minister, Stephen Pichon, during the latter's first term at the Quai d'Orsay in 1906–1907. After the Armistice, the two worked together closely to overcome Clemenceau's legendary mistrust of the Foreign Ministry. British statesmen considered Berthelot anti-British, whilst German observers accused him of hatred of Germany. Both assessments were wide of the mark. Berthelot was a consistent proponent of the Franco-British *entente* and a relatively early convert to a policy of cautious rapprochement with Germany. His overarching priority was the pursuit of France's interests.<sup>37</sup>

Another important but less well-known figure in French policy making was Louis Aubert. A historian by training, Aubert had served as director of Tardieu's *Service d'études et d'information* at the French High Commission in New York. He returned to Paris with Tardieu after the Armistice, serving as his secretary and chief of staff during and after the Peace Conference. He participated in drafting a large number of key memoranda, particularly concerning territorial questions. In this capacity, Aubert insisted repeatedly



on the need to frame French arguments in a way to guarantee Anglo-American support. Warning that arguments based on history and sentiment were unlikely to convince France's allies, he argued instead for a forward-looking policy that aimed at "the construction of a new international system."<sup>38</sup>

Clemenceau, however, retained the final word on virtually every important question.<sup>39</sup> Although famous for his pessimistic pronouncements on human nature, democracy, civil liberties, and secular values were consistent themes of his long career in French politics. Clemenceau was of the generation of 1871. He had lived through defeat and the Commune and believed that recovery of the lost provinces of Alsace-Lorraine was the responsibility of every French citizen. These democratic and patriotic convictions made the "Tiger" a ferocious critic of autocracy and an implacable enemy of Imperial Germany. Moreover, with his fluent English, Clemenceau possessed an extensive network of friends and political contacts across the Channel. No narrow-minded French nationalist, he had long been a committed proponent of good relations with Britain and was convinced that Anglo-American support remained the most fundamental of France's peace aims.<sup>40</sup>

Clemenceau made this clear in a rare speech on the subject of peace making delivered before the Chamber of Deputies on 29 December 1918—it followed an intervention in which Pichon made fourteen references to the crucial importance of Allied unity for the security of France.<sup>41</sup> Whilst praising the value of "solid and well-defended frontiers, armaments and something called a balance of powers," he also stressed the need to "alter the sentiments that prevailed before the war" and build "a new edifice" for the international system.<sup>42</sup> Declaring that he had formulated a list of demands that his government would pose during peace negotiations, Clemenceau warned, "some of them I can and perhaps must sacrifice to a larger interest." And he was clear about the nature of this larger interest: "Accord with our Allies brought us victory and it is this accord that will also deliver peace and justice to the world in the years to come." He referred repeatedly to the need to prolong the wartime coalition in peacetime. "If we do not arrive at an accord with our Allies, our victory will have been in vain." The peacetime unity of the wartime partners would therefore serve as his "directing thought." "To this unity" he declared "I will make every sacrifice."<sup>43</sup> Clemenceau would hold true to his word.

### III

From the outbreak of war, security from future German aggression had dominated public and official discourse in France. A recurrent theme in both realms was the need to go further than merely reclaiming Alsace-Lorraine. To ensure its long-term security, France must detach the territory on the left bank of the Rhine River from the rest of Germany; stretching west of the Rhine from the Netherlands in the north to the Saar coal basin in the south,

it was a traditional highway for invasions both eastward and westward. Denying Germany the right to use the Left Bank as a staging ground for yet another attack on France was an undisputed priority for French policy makers. This, the argument went, would provide France with a vital strategic buffer.<sup>44</sup> Advocates of this solution drew on a much older discourse of France's "natural frontiers," the origins of which traced to the late Middle Ages.<sup>45</sup> Embedded in the Armistice conditions demanded by French officials in late October and early November 1918 were designs to alter the Rhineland's political status. These included control of key strategic bridge-heads, the military occupation of the Left Bank, and the creation of a 40 kilometre-wide demilitarised zone on the east bank of the river.<sup>46</sup> In the weeks that followed, the French policy machine set to work drafting a series of memoranda to inform peace negotiations. The question of France's eastern frontier with Germany was central to all prescriptions for future security. Tardieu described the future political and military status of this region as "the essential problem which dominates all others in our preparations."<sup>47</sup>

The Quai d'Orsay took the lead. Gabriel Hanotaux, the diplomat, historian, and former foreign minister, called for a "grand peace" of "European organisation." He meant in effect breaking up Germany: detaching the Left Bank and occupying German territory "to the line of the Elbe River." Most of the Left Bank would fall to France, including Luxemburg. Reconstituted Germany would become a loose federation of states, each with its own legislature and foreign policy.<sup>48</sup> Most French diplomats favoured a less radical solution. Jules Laroche, a rising star within the Foreign Ministry's political directorate, advocated neutralising the Left Bank, arguing to deny Germany "all of the military attributes of sovereignty on the Left Bank," which would be subject to a permanent inter-Allied military occupation. He added that France must insist on privileged commercial relations with the Left Bank. This, he judged, would establish the conditions "for its eventual political detachment from Germany."<sup>49</sup> Laroche's proposal provided a means of adapting the principle of "self-determination" to French aims to dominate the Rhineland. Berthelot in Paris and Cambon in London endorsed this "gradual" project for detaching the Left Bank from the rest of Germany.<sup>50</sup> In early December, Berthelot came out against annexation or any unilateral alteration of the political status of the Left Bank. He advocated instead a sustained effort to convince the Rhinelanders over time that their political future lay with France.<sup>51</sup> Tardieu endorsed this strategy, judging that the "creation of a different economic orientation" on the Left Bank would produce "the *eventual* conditions for a political reorientation."<sup>52</sup>

Foch was a prominent voice in policy discussions concerning the German frontier. From the moment fighting ceased, his staff produced a barrage of detailed memoranda emphasising the strategic importance of the Rhine as well as the distinct ethnic make-up and political views of the Rhinelanders

population.<sup>53</sup> France could no longer count on Russia to provide an eastern counterweight to Germany. The logical solution was therefore to create one or more independent Rhenish states tied politically to France and its allies. Only such a grouping could provide “the natural barrier of the Rhine” that Foch argued was a fundamental condition for future European peace and security.<sup>54</sup> One notable aspect of these early Rhineland memoranda is the striking absence of any reference to either America or Britain. French officials seem to have assumed that France’s Great Power allies would acquiesce in their projects for territorial revision if Paris gave lip service to the principle of self-determination. As Clemenceau, Tardieu, and Aubert warned, however, this assumption was to prove unfounded.

Britain was far from absent, conversely, in the policy prescriptions of the French Embassy in London. A traditionalist, Cambon placed great importance on the value of the balance of power and military alliances. He was openly contemptuous of the ideas of Wilson, whom he considered “incapable of understanding the complexity of European problems” and judged “a grave threat to France.” He argued forcefully that France could only achieve its core security objectives if it proceeded in close agreement with Britain. Cambon did great harm to this cause, however. When meeting with the foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour, he predicted that the future would witness a titanic global struggle pitting Britain and France, on one hand, and an alliance of Germany and America, on the other. For his part, Balfour considered Cambon’s ideas to be “little short of insanity.”<sup>55</sup> The ambassador’s apocalyptic imaginings only strengthened existing British predispositions toward co-operation with America.

Linked to plans to detach the Rhineland were ambitions to secure access to needed energy sources to expand France’s industrial base at Germany’s expense. The return of Lorraine, along with Luxemburg’s economic independence, deprived Germany of 80 percent of its pre-war iron ore reserves and 36 percent of its steel production.<sup>56</sup> Pre-war France had been a net importer of coal, but Alsace-Lorraine would not improve France’s coal deficit. The Quai d’Orsay estimated that France would still need to import nearly 40 percent of its coal and nearly 65 percent of metallurgical coke required for steel production.<sup>57</sup> The wholesale destruction of many French mines by the German army as it withdrew from northern France in 1918 exacerbated the situation. These considerations underpinned the French case to annex the Saar coal basin. They were also central to France’s successful demand for annual deliveries from Germany of 20 million tonnes of coal per year, up to three-quarters of which was to be high-grade coking coal.<sup>58</sup>

These arrangements would weaken Germany. French control of the Saar coalfield, combined with the anticipated cession of much of Upper Silesia to Poland, would reduce Germany’s coal production by nearly one-half. They would also secure greater independence for France from Britain. Berthelot

stressed that as the war ended, France found itself in a situation “of unacceptable dependence” on British coal and coke. The post-war energy policy devised by the Quai d’Orsay and Ministry of Commerce would end this dependence whilst opening the way for a renaissance in French steel production.<sup>59</sup>

Plans to transform France’s steel industry were part of a wider policy for economic recovery and security. The driving force behind this policy was the Commerce Ministry under Clémentel, which had developed a thoroughly trans-Atlantic vision of post-war economic order. The overall objective was to ensure French economic recovery and meet the challenge posed by future competition with the much larger German economy. The short-term aim was to organise a preferential system of trade to ensure French access to the markets, raw materials, and foodstuffs required for France’s recovery. Central to this system was an inter-Allied consortium for controlling the price of raw materials as well as transport costs.<sup>60</sup> The long-term aim was to construct an “Atlantic Economic Union” including the United States and Britain. Within this union, access to raw materials would provide “an economic weapon” to “constrain German industry to collaborate peacefully with other nations.”<sup>61</sup> At the heart of French policy was a conception of economic security based on trans-Atlantic co-operation.

These proposals served as the basis for a more detailed programme that became France’s initial policy for future economic order at the Peace Conference. This programme went further by advocating the construction of an Atlantic commercial consortium dominated by the victorious democracies but operating under the aegis of the League of Nations. It also advocated imposing a discriminatory commercial regime to remain in place through the years of France’s reconstruction. The Allied Powers would collaborate in the “rational distribution” of raw materials at fixed prices and establish a regime of pooled transport at set costs. Such a system would constitute a “durable cement” to “bind the British Empire and the US to France” in a post-war “economic alliance.”<sup>62</sup>

The envisaged “Democratic Economic Union” would be part of the institutional machinery of the yet-to-be-created new international organisation.<sup>63</sup> Excluded in the first instance from these arrangements, Germany would gain admission only after demonstrating its commitment to international co-operation. Thereafter the trans-Atlantic regime would provide “an effective means of recalling to Germany the need to respect its obligations as a civilised power.”<sup>64</sup> “We have no wish to ruin [Germany],” Clémentel insisted. Revenge was counterproductive to the need to restore France. Nevertheless, Germany must provide “evidence that it has embraced conceptions similar to those of the community of free nations.” When it did so, the punitive commercial regime would end.<sup>65</sup> Crucially, however, this vision of a trans-Atlantic post-war economic community was based on the assumption of full British and American participation.

French officials were aware that there would be opposition to their programme in Britain and especially the United States. To exert pressure on the British and Americans to embrace its approach, Clemenceau's government linked reparations to a post-war trade regime. In internal conversations, Commerce Ministry officials were sceptical that large reparations payments from Germany were either wise or feasible. Large cash transfers would drive up inflation, whilst reparation "in kind" would flood the French market with German exports and threaten France's economic recovery.<sup>66</sup> To make virtue of necessity, the Ministry proposed a multilateral alternative. The Central Powers would accept liability for the total costs of the war, but taking their capacity to pay into account, the expectation was that they would in reality pay a considerably smaller sum in annuities over 25 years. A "worldwide pool" to which all Powers would contribute would cover the remaining costs of reconstruction. Britain would be a net contributor to this fund.<sup>67</sup> Clémentel therefore urged the Clemenceau government to insist that accepting relatively modest reparations from Germany, France would require "commonly agreed revision and reduction" of the war debts it owed Britain and America.<sup>68</sup> In a strategy inspired partly by thinking in some quarters of Whitehall, reparations demands were to be used as leverage to obtain relief on war debts and create a multilateral commercial and shipping regime to underpin French economic recovery.<sup>69</sup>

The Commerce Ministry's programme, endorsed by Clemenceau in September 1918, envisaged in effect a mutualisation of the costs of the war and reconstruction. It proposed a forward-looking solution to the challenge of restoring the European economy that in many ways anticipated the strategy adopted after 1945.<sup>70</sup> Given British commitments to post-war commercial co-operation made during the war, especially at the Allied Economic Conference in 1916, the anticipation was that Lloyd George's government would lend its support to this bid for a trans-Atlantic economic system for post-war reconstruction.<sup>71</sup>

Britain was also central to French plans for a "society of nations." In June 1917, the wartime government of Alexandre Ribot was the first amongst the major Powers to appoint a committee to design a blueprint for an international organisation. Calls for creating such an association reverberated powerfully within the centre-left and left of the French political spectrum. The resulting *Commission interministérielle pour la Société des Nations* [CISDN] began meeting on 28 September 1917 and was much larger and more active than the corresponding Phillimore Committee in Britain.<sup>72</sup> It met regularly through June 1918, when Clemenceau's government received its final report. Its meetings generated a large number of study papers, proposals, and counter-proposals.<sup>73</sup> The dominant voice within the CISDN was undoubtedly that of its chair, Léon Bourgeois. A career politician, former premier and foreign minister, Bourgeois had been France's most prominent

advocate of a “society” of nations for more than a decade. His vision was that of an association of “civilised” states pursuing peace through the rule of international law backed by the use of collective force.<sup>74</sup> The programme ultimately adopted by the CISDN was inspired in the main by internationalist concepts of world order. It envisaged a League of democratic states organised to preserve peace by establishing and upholding the rule of international law. The central components of this organisation were a council with executive authority, a permanent court of arbitration, a robust system of legal, political, economic, and military sanctions, and a powerful international force with a permanent command structure.<sup>75</sup>

The CISDN programme differed fundamentally from that put forward by Phillimore’s Committee. The French proposal accepted that states would give up a measure of sovereignty in return for collective security, an idea anathema to the British vision of international organisation. The Phillimore Report attributed considerable importance to arbitration as a means of settling international disputes, but it did not propose the creation of a permanent international court. Moreover, where the CISDN envisaged a permanent council with the power to impose sanctions, the British conception referred to a “conference of great powers” only to deliberate and recommend action to member-states. Most significantly, there was no British equivalent of the international military force advocated in the French proposal.<sup>76</sup> The CISDN, along with the rest of the Foreign Ministry, was well aware of the details of the Phillimore Report and its differences.<sup>77</sup> Yet Bourgeois and the internationalists on the Commission either did not realise, or were unconcerned, that the French conception was likely to provoke robust objections from the British. Indeed, it was doubtful that it would gain the unqualified support of either the Quai d’Orsay or premier. Clemenceau was sceptical of the entire project, privately mocking Bourgeois. The CISDN proposal, once submitted, went to London and Washington without any commentary or supporting covering text.<sup>78</sup>

British policy objectives were much less important to the evolution of French policy towards the peace settlement in Eastern Europe. Territorial revisions east of Germany were not a priority for Clemenceau—the issues at stake required vast detailed knowledge of the region that only the Foreign Ministry could provide. The Quai d’Orsay was thus able to assert its expertise and dominate French policy towards the east. The unbelievable chaos in revolutionary Russia made this policy uncertain. Faced with a lack of reliable intelligence on events in the former Tsarist Empire, most French observers remained convinced that the Bolsheviks were co-operating with Germany in secret, an enduring conviction despite the evidence of the German revolution in late 1918 and early 1919.<sup>79</sup> France was the last Allied Power to abandon the idea that military intervention could “liberate Russia from both the German yoke and Bolshevik anarchy.”<sup>80</sup> By late 1918 the British and



American governments both refused to continue their intervention in Russia. Combined with a mutiny in France's Black Sea squadron, this fact compelled a change of policy. French planning was quickly re-oriented towards the inter-related aims of containing the spread of Bolshevism and constructing an "eastern barrier" to future German expansion.

In mid-November 1918, Berthelot argued that the Allies must erect "a cordon sanitaire against Bolshevism."<sup>81</sup> By mid-January, the political directorate at the Quai d'Orsay recommended the construction of an "armed barrage" east of the Reich based on Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania.<sup>82</sup> The creation of a bloc of "Successor States" in the east had long been a current in French post-war planning. The army and naval general staffs endorsed this strategy. Both also recommended creating a viable South Slav state to help counter-balance Italian ambitions in the region.<sup>83</sup> Laroche stressed the historical roots of the strategy of an "eastern counterweight" to Germanic power: "Since the reign of François I, France, in need of security, has always searched for an alliance with the power situated on the other side of Germany. But this power, for us, can now no longer be Russia. It must today be Poland and Bohemia."<sup>84</sup>

Two *ad hoc* committees of senior civil servants and soldiers produced policy papers for the French Delegation. Both stressed the importance of forging an "anti-German barrage" through the creation of a strong Romania, a Czech-Slovak state with defensible frontiers, and a "greater Poland" with access to the Baltic Sea and possession of Upper Silesian coalfields—which had not been part of Poland since before the First Partition of that country in 1772.<sup>85</sup> This imperative was to create strategically viable states immune to Bolshevism and, concurrently, capable of serving as an "eastern barrier" to Germany.<sup>86</sup> Of all aspects of French policy at the Peace Conference, balance of power considerations most shaped plans for Eastern Europe. They were also least influenced by sensitivity to British requirements.

Britain and its Empire were pivotal, conversely, to French planning for the extra-European Peace Settlement. During the war, the French and British had arrogated to themselves the right to determine the fate of the imperial territories of Germany and Turkey. The May 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement, the result of five months of difficult wrangling between British and French officials, had stipulated the creation of respective spheres of influence in the former Ottoman Arab provinces outside the Arabian Peninsula. France would have "such direct or indirect control as they desire" of present-day Lebanon, the Syrian coastline, as well Cilicia and territory stretching to Armenia. Britain would have similar control of Mesopotamia. The agreement envisaged "an independent Arab state or Confederation" in the interior but this region was divided into respective zones of British and French influence. The French region stretched from Kirkuk and Mosul in the east to the coastal



region of Syria. Palestine, meanwhile, would fall under “an international administration.”<sup>87</sup>

The Sykes-Picot accord stood in contradiction to commitments to the cause of Arab independence made by the British high commissioner in Egypt to Hussein bin Ali, the Sharif of Mecca. This pledge had been in exchange for Hussein’s support for an Arab revolt against Ottoman rule. At war’s end, Britain and France issued a joint declaration “concerning Syria and Mesopotamia,” promising “the final liberation of those peoples who have for so long been oppressed by the Turks” and support for “national governments and administrations deriving their authority from the free exercise of the initiative and choice of the indigenous populations.” However, the declaration also expressed the French and British aim to “ensure by their support and by adequate assistance the regular working of [regional] governments and administrations.”<sup>88</sup> The two great European empires did not intend to retreat from the region.

Franco-British negotiations over the Ottoman provinces took place in an atmosphere of acrimony and mistrust that reflected a long history of imperial rivalry. French colonialists remained deeply concerned by the activities of Arab nationalists in Syria. The British army’s advance through Mesopotamia to take Damascus in 1918 scarcely allayed these concerns. The British military administration “on the ground” did not acknowledge France’s “rights” granted under the Sykes-Picot accord. Both sides denounced the cynicism and hypocrisy of the other. François Georges-Picot, the French official charged with negotiating with the British for the spoils of the Ottoman provinces, observed that the chief British reflex in his dealings with them had been “deceive and dissemble.” Lord Robert Cecil, an under-secretary at the Foreign Office, warned Sykes, “[w]e must never forget that, internationally, the French are a grasping people.”<sup>89</sup> The one thing that officials from both Powers agreed was the desirability of extending the reach and influence of their respective empires.

France’s war effort had benefited significantly from the contributions of its Empire. More than 550,000 colonial soldiers had been mobilised during the war along with nearly 223,000 labourers for French war industries.<sup>90</sup> Yet colonial questions were not central in the preoccupations of Clemenceau and his chief advisors. This gave permanent officials freedom to formulate policy but carried the danger of their recommendations being ignored. Nor was the French policy machine imperial in its outlook and reflexes in the manner of the British government. The chief inspiration for the French colonial programme came from a variety of civil society associations like the *Société de géographie*, *Comité de l’Afrique française*, *Comité de l’Asie française*, and *Congrès français de la Syrie*. These groupings counted significant numbers of diplomats and soldiers amongst their memberships and received political patronage from the *Parti coloniale* alliance in Parliament. They also provided volunteers for two influential investigative commissions appointed by the

wartime government of Aristide Briand to draw up recommendations for France's Imperial aims during peace negotiations.<sup>91</sup>

The programme that emerged approached the question of empire very much in the manner of earlier peace conferences in Vienna (1814–1815) and Berlin (1878). Imperial possessions were spoils for division amongst the powerful. Wilson's recommendation to take the views of colonial subjects into account appeared unworkable given the level of "civilisation" attributed to most colonised peoples. Colonial minister Henry Simon observed that assuming control of German West Africa was "one of the best guarantees of political and economic power for future generations."<sup>92</sup> With proposals for the former Ottoman territories based on implementing Sykes-Picot, French planners remained committed to this traditional secret imperial agreement even after it attracted widespread international criticism when published by the Bolsheviks.<sup>93</sup>

Berthelot summarised the Foreign Ministry's position on the future of Ottoman territories in December 1918. He argued that the Ottoman Empire had practiced the "periodic massacre of its subjects" and was "diametrically opposed" to "the principles for which the Allies have fought." It would therefore need dismantling and reorganising into new political units of some kind. Still, the liberated peoples were unready for full political independence. They would require, instead, a long period of "European tutelage and control."<sup>94</sup> Berthelot seems to have been unaware of the irony in this judgement, coming from a European participant in the greatest slaughter in the history of humanity. Whatever the case, British agreement and co-operation was a pre-requisite in virtually all French plans for imperial expansion.

#### IV

Early evidence of Clemenceau's determination to proceed in close co-operation with Britain emerged during Franco-British and Allied meetings at the beginning of December 1918. The French premier had been shocked by the way Wilson had undertaken unilateral negotiations with the Germans prior to the Armistice. He therefore travelled to London to explore the possibility of forging an understanding with Lloyd George's government that would present the American president with a united front on core issues. Clemenceau's aim was to offer concessions on extra-European issues to gain British support for French plans for the Rhineland.<sup>95</sup>

This strategy was unsuccessful. Lloyd George's government was by this point leaning toward an "Atlanticist" orientation that placed priority on close co-operation with America wherever possible.<sup>96</sup> Foch met privately with Lloyd George to outline French plans for neutralising the Left Bank. Lloyd George, Balfour, and other British policy makers were non-committal at the formal inter-Allied conference held on 3 December.<sup>97</sup> Clemenceau met with Lloyd George privately the previous day. At this meeting, he offered to abandon

French claims to oil fields around Mosul as well as Palestine in exchange for British support for French control of Syria, the coast of Lebanon, and France's designs for Germany's western frontier. Clemenceau claimed the prime minister accepted this bargain. Archival evidence suggests that it became the basis for French planning.<sup>98</sup> Lloyd George later denied having agreed to anything, however, and said nothing of French demands in his brief to the Imperial War Cabinet. The lack of formal minutes or written agreements caused a series of violent confrontations in the months to come.<sup>99</sup>

The first issue over which French delegates found themselves in serious disagreement with their British colleagues concerned the structure and character of the League. The existing literature on the League's origins represents the CISDN plan as a continuation of the wartime alliance in disguise.<sup>100</sup> This obscures important aspects of the story. Certainly, few French policy makers viewed a future international organisation as a viable source of French security. Most hoped that membership in such an organisation would help bind France to Britain and the United States. But the French delegates on the League Commission at the Peace Conference had very different understandings of their role. Both Bourgeois and his deputy, Ferdinand Larnaude, pursued the juridical vision of a "society of nations" at the heart of the CISDN programme.<sup>101</sup>

Clemenceau gave little thought to the League, his public pronouncements suggesting that the principal role of any post-war international organisation must be to create a new moral order. When Wilson's close advisor, Colonel Edward House, met Clemenceau to convince him of the merits of an American concept of the League as the engine for the moral transformation of world politics, the premier feigned emotion and promised to support this project.<sup>102</sup> In reality, Clemenceau and Tardieu hoped to use concessions over the League to obtain an American strategic commitment to western Europe. It was not until 17 January that Clemenceau deigned to appoint Bourgeois as head of the French Delegation to the League Commission.<sup>103</sup> The fact was that Clemenceau's commitment to House had undermined Bourgeois's role and destroyed any prospects for the French plan. The premier advised Bourgeois that this was part of a larger design. "Go down fighting," he exhorted Bourgeois. "Your failure will allow me to demand supplementary guarantees on the Rhine."<sup>104</sup>

There was little chance for the French League programme in any case. From the outset, the British and American delegates on the League Commission proceeded in lock step, united in their opposition to French ideas concerning the nature of the organisation. When the Commission first convened on 3 February 1919, it became quickly apparent that the British and Americans had been working together to produce a joint blueprint. The result was the "Hurst-Miller" draft Covenant.<sup>105</sup> The French Delegation knew nothing of this collaboration—although American officials had approached Italian Premier

Vitorrio Orlando to secure his advance support for the Anglo-American conception.<sup>106</sup> Bourgeois and Larnaude consequently found themselves isolated when the Commission chair, Wilson, supported by Cecil as head of the British Delegation, announced that the Hurst-Miller draft would serve as the basis for all further discussion. The French delegates had not seen a prior draft of the document. Nor were they able to present their own programme for discussion—although minutes of the meeting, later doctored, suggested that both France and Italy tabled proposals.<sup>107</sup> Thereafter, forced to fight a lengthy rear-guard action to insert as many elements of the French programme as possible into the Covenant, the French delegates experienced only limited success.

The French objected that the mechanisms for settling disputes in the Anglo-American proposal were neither binding nor envisaged means for the League to enforce its decisions. This was because the International Court proposed in the Hurst-Miller draft would have limited jurisdiction even over League members.<sup>108</sup> The core difference between the French and British plans was that for the French, the League should be a machine to keep the peace through the imposition and enforcement of international law. For the British, conversely, the League's chief functions were to provide Anglo-American international moral leadership and to protect the interests of the British Empire.<sup>109</sup> When Bourgeois or Larnaude pressed for a clear jurisdiction for the International Court and procedures to decide on sanctions, Wilson typically replied, the “court of world opinion” would provide a more effective forum than any international legal regime “because it is more powerful and can impose itself without technical subtleties.”<sup>110</sup>

Cecil and the British Delegation supported Wilson at every turn. When the French called for establishing an international armed force, they met with a common front opposed to this proposal as an unacceptable violation of national sovereignty.<sup>111</sup> The League Council that emerged from Commission deliberations could only recommend measures to enforce its decisions. The result was triumph for the Anglo-American conception of a League able to exert moral pressure but lacking the capacity to impose binding sanctions through its member-states. Powers committed to collective security would spend much of the next fifteen years seeking ways to close the “gaps” in Articles 10–16 of the Covenant, which laid out procedures for collective action to impose the decisions of the League Council.<sup>112</sup>

Negotiations for the economic and financial settlement also foundered on the shoals of Britain's “Atlanticist” orientation at the Peace Conference. The reparations settlement with Germany dominates the literature on economic issues at the Conference. Yet from the French perspective, reparation was one dimension of a larger project to recalibrate the world economy to promote international co-operation based on trans-Atlantic co-ordination of shipping and raw materials. The proposal presented by Clémentel in

early February to the Economic Drafting Committee of the Conference called for establishing a trans-Atlantic economic consortium dominated by the victorious democracies.<sup>113</sup> French negotiators anticipated opposition from the Wilson administration. To overcome American misgivings, Clémentel framed his “Plan” in ideologically charged terms and proposed to embed it within the future League. Existing trans-Atlantic Allied co-operation would expand and fall under the League’s auspices. Clémentel stressed ideological bonds to cement a future “Democratic Union” and equip it to uphold a new international order.<sup>114</sup>

Clémentel’s strategy failed completely. Wilson’s Administration remained utterly opposed to “special economic combinations” and “any form of economic boycott.”<sup>115</sup> Clémentel responded with the prearranged strategy of linking proposals for economic collaboration to reparations. He argued that, if it could not count on economic collaboration with its wartime Allies, France would have no choice but to demand “full reparations” from Germany. This tactic failed to induce any change in the American position. Wilson’s Administration remained firm in committing to a return to *laissez-faire* liberal capitalism, decisively rejecting Clémentel’s plan for a trans-Atlantic economic system. The result undermined Clémentel’s influence in the Clemenceau government. By mid-February, Loucheur had assumed effective control over financial negotiations.<sup>116</sup>

Throughout this phase of negotiations, British support for the French position was conspicuous by its absence. British policy moved resolutely away from post-war inter-Allied economic co-operation. Indeed, always seeking tactical advantage, even at the expense of long-term considerations, Lloyd George welcomed tension between the French and American delegations. “The Americans ... are becoming more and more anti-French,” he advised his coalition partner, the Conservative leader, Andrew Bonar Law. The Prime Minister judged that this was a positive development because “in proportion to [the Americans’] increasing suspicion of the French is their trust of the British.”<sup>117</sup>

Throughout the Peace Conference and afterward, French and British negotiators disagreed over German reparations. Initially, the central issue was the percentage to which each Power was entitled. The Armistice terms had included France’s right to reparation for devastation suffered during the war, the costs calculated at 64 billion gold marks. Britain, conversely, had suffered crippling losses to its navy, merchant marine, and public finances. Such losses were less apparent and harder to calculate than the costs of French and Belgian reconstruction. French negotiators proposed a total bill of 91 billion gold marks but indicated they would agree to a higher figure provided they received at least 55 percent of the total sum.<sup>118</sup> Lloyd George’s government demanded that Britain receive at least one-quarter of the total collected. When French negotiators refused to budge from 55 percent, the

British insisted that war pensions must be included in the reparations demanded of Germany, which drove calculations for its total liability to astronomical sums over 200 billion gold marks.<sup>119</sup> This allowed Loucheur to assume a relatively moderate position in relation to that of British officials. His chief priority became to secure agreement that Germany's reparations debt could be mobilised through the sale of bonds on international money markets. Loucheur was intransigent only over the question of France's percentage.<sup>120</sup>

Still, negotiations concerning Germany's liability were divorced from political reality. A reparations figure based on a realistic assessment of Germany's capacity to pay would have been too low for either French or British public opinion to accept. Clemenceau therefore agreed with Lloyd George to delay calculation of the final sum until 1921.<sup>121</sup> A Reparations Commission was created to determine Germany's total liability by 1921. In the interim, the Weimar government would make a payment of 20 billion gold marks to the Allies. Public expectations at the end of the war made the question of reparations impossible to resolve in 1919; meanwhile British policy towards them changed dramatically.<sup>122</sup>

One issue over which France and Britain shared clear interests was war debts. Both the British and French delegations argued that servicing the debt acquired during the war would cripple France, Belgium, and Italy. Britain had acquired much of this debt on behalf of its Allies during the war. Early on, the French and Italian delegations suggested that America consider reapportioning the costs of the war, arguing that it would allow the victors to moderate their demands for German reparations.<sup>123</sup> From within the Treasury, Keynes, yet to draft his excoriating assessment of French policy, also proposed a mutualisation of inter-Allied war debts. He warned of the crushing burden that these obligations would place on European states and singled out France as a case in point.<sup>124</sup>

These arguments fell on deaf ears. Wilson's Administration responded to pleas for a revision of war debts by threatening to cut off the vital flow of credit that was keeping European states from economic and social disaster in 1919. It forced Clemenceau to publicly commit that France would honour its financial obligations.<sup>125</sup> Faced with American intransigence, London's response was to break ranks. Senior British policy makers began to pursue an Anglo-American financial entente capable of dictating terms to Britain's erstwhile allies. The Cabinet Finance Committee observed, "It is important that the British Treasury should insist on its position as a fellow creditor with the United States treasury rather than as a fellow debtor with the French treasury."<sup>126</sup> The Atlanticist impulse was decisive in undermining British support for French proposals to create a trans-Atlantic economic and financial order of the kind that emerged nearly three decades later under very different geo-political circumstances.



## V

The fate of former German and Ottoman territory caused some of the bitterest Franco-British disagreements at the Peace Conference. From the outset, both imperial Powers had to reckon with the implications of both the Russian revolution and the principle of self-determination for their imperial aims. Bolshevik success stoked anti-imperialist sentiment across the globe. Wilson's war aims, the "Fourteen Points," were in part a response to this challenge, the fifth of which stipulated that all colonial adjustments must take into account "the interests of the population concerned." Wilson's Administration was unequivocal that America had not joined the war to further the interests of the European empires. The normative context of the post-war era posed an unmistakeable threat to the legitimacy of European colonialism.<sup>127</sup>

The British were ahead of the French in adjusting to the new international environment. Critics of Imperial rule and advocates of reforming Imperial practice were more numerous and voluble in Britain than in France. On 5 January 1918, three days before Wilson's "Fourteen Points" address, Lloyd George acknowledged that "the separate national conditions" of the Arab peoples needed recognition. He added, in his "Caxton Hall" address, that the "wishes and interests" of the population in Germany's colonies must have "primary regard" in any peace settlement.<sup>128</sup> Not all British officials embraced this position wholeheartedly. Curzon, a War Cabinet minister and chair of its powerful "Eastern Committee," judged that Britain must "play self-determination for all it is worth, wherever we are involved in difficulties with the French, the Arabs or anybody else."<sup>129</sup> The British solution to square aspirations for Imperial expansion with the changed political context was the mandate system. Selected victorious Powers would assume responsibility for administering former German and Ottoman imperial territories under a "mandate" from the League.<sup>130</sup>

French colonial advocates interpreted this system as another example of Anglo-American collusion at France's expense—this time depriving France of the imperial compensations it had earned on the battlefields of Western Europe. When the first proposals for mandates came before the Council of Ten, Wilson and Lloyd George were isolated in supporting the idea. Simon rejected the principle of mandates, arguing in favour of "annexation, pure and simple." Only the attribution of imperial sovereignty, he argued, would induce interested Powers to make investments necessary for "the effective protection of the natives during the period required for their development towards a higher plane of civilization." These long-term aims, Simon assured the Council, had always been the "higher aspiration" of French imperialism.<sup>131</sup>

This ostensibly hard-line approach was almost certainly a negotiating position. The essential French aim was to ensure the right to recruit colonial



soldiers from Togoland and Cameroon. Clemenceau cared little and knew less about France's imperial interests in this part of the world. His chief concern was the potential manpower contribution from equatorial Africa to the future Franco-German military balance. He therefore indicated that his government was willing to assume these territories as mandates provided it secured this right. Lloyd George famously agreed on the understanding that France must not "train big nigger armies for the purposes of aggression." He also proposed amendments to the projected mandates system. Colonial territories earmarked as mandates would be evaluated and placed in different categories—A, B, and C—according to their supposed level of political and economic development. Category A mandates were expected to receive self-rule in the near future, whilst B and C territories would remain under the tutelage of the relevant "mandatory power" for the foreseeable future. French negotiators agreed to this compromise on 30 January. France eventually received most of Cameroon and parts of Togoland as category C mandates, administering both as traditional colonial possessions through the inter-war period.<sup>132</sup>

Syria proved much more difficult. By the time the Peace Conference opened, Clemenceau had acquired a better grasp of the importance of oil than had been the case during the London summit in December.<sup>133</sup> The British, meanwhile, were determined to overturn Sykes-Picot altogether. Curzon's Eastern Committee, ignoring intelligence assessments to the contrary, warned repeatedly that a strong French presence in the Middle East threatened British communications with India. Needing little convincing, Lloyd George had developed a genuine enthusiasm for colonial expansion and a particular fixation with Mesopotamia, Syria, and the Holy Land. The plan was to use Britain's military control of the region to force a revision of the wartime agreement and, as the colonial secretary Lord Milner observed, to "diddle the French out of Syria."<sup>134</sup> The result was one of the most rancorous and sustained Franco-British confrontations of the Conference.

Tensions over Syria boiled over during a Council of Four meeting on 20 March. Pichon made the case for a French mandate in Syria based on the Sykes-Picot agreement stressing France's "historic rights": which, he argued, dated at least to the rule of Louis XIV. Pichon then alluded to the London meeting on 2 December where Clemenceau agreed to British claims to Mosul and Palestine. The British government, he noted, had since gone back on this arrangement, now demanding that France renounce control over nearly the whole region. This was unacceptable given the tremendous sacrifices that France had made for common victory on the battlefields of Europe. Lloyd George responded that a French mandate in Syria would be "in violation of our bargain with King Hussein." Pichon responded that Britain neither consulted nor informed France about this arrangement.<sup>135</sup> At issue was Imperial pre-eminence in the Middle East.

The deadlock remained unresolved during an especially heated exchange between Lloyd George and Clemenceau at the Council of Four on 24 March. "All of this comes from your conversations with Lord Curzon," Clemenceau complained. "Curzon is a charming man and very able, but he is hostile to France." The French premier observed that his "constant policy" had been "to preserve the union of France with Great Britain and America." But giving up Syria was a concession he could not make. It would cause the fall of his government and French opinion would turn decisively against Britain and America. Clemenceau implored Lloyd George not to give the French public the impression that the Anglo-Americans were colluding to "chase out the French." Such a development, he warned, would "produce a reaction in the French mind" that would "create great difficulties for the world."<sup>136</sup>

Wilson's proposal to form an investigative commission to "discover the desires of the populations" of Syria and Mesopotamia only partially alleviated tensions. Duly appointed, the Commission did not leave until the summer and did not publish its report until 1922. By this time, a series of bilateral agreements between Britain and France settled the question, culminating at the San Remo Conference of 1920 where the French and British unilaterally awarded themselves category A mandates in Syria and Mesopotamia. By autumn 1919, the effort to secure Congressional approval for the Treaty of Versailles consumed the energies of Wilson and his team. Wilson's absence, interestingly, induced a more conciliatory stance on the part of Lloyd George's government. Its policy of cleaving to America to out-manoeuvre France collapsed in the wake of American retreat in autumn 1919.<sup>137</sup>

No other issue in the peace negotiations in Paris emerged as heavily weighted with the cultural baggage of centuries of Franco-British rivalry as the extra-European settlement. Even Clemenceau, implacably opposed to colonial expansion for nearly the whole of his career, found himself drawn into a confrontation with Britain over France's imperial rights. The emotive power of Empire remained irresistible in Great Power negotiations at the close of the Great War, the colonial settlement in the end a traditional European imperial arrangement that still reverberates through the Middle East today.

## VI

The French strategy to create a strong group of middle-ranking Powers to Germany's east was generally successful despite robust resistance from Lloyd George over the Polish question. In sub-committees established to consider the frontiers of the "Successor States," French officials argued repeatedly that strategic factors could not be ignored altogether in pursuit of self-determination.<sup>138</sup> Clemenceau took up the same argument in the Council of Four when it began meeting at the beginning of March: "We must accept inevitable infringements to the principle of self-determination if we wish to safeguard the principle itself."<sup>139</sup>

British and American officials once again met privately before attending multi-lateral sessions concerning Eastern Europe. Neither delegation took a vibrant interest in the constitution of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Both of these states-in-the-making possessed nearly all of the territory they wished to claim when their delegations arrived in Paris. There were misgivings about the status of ethnic Germans in northern, western, and southern Bohemia. Czechoslovakia's frontiers included the German-speaking "Sudetenland" within its borders. There were also concerns about the situation of non-Serbs in the new South Slav state. In the end, however, neither the British nor Americans opposed the establishment of a strong Yugoslavia capable of forming part of an "eastern barrier" to Germany, whilst at the same time serving as counter-point to Italian ambitions in the Mediterranean.<sup>140</sup>

The German-Polish frontier was different. Lloyd George stood strongly against the reconstitution of a "greater Poland" as recommended by the Peace Conference sub-commission on this question. He argued that plans to include more than two million Germans within the new Polish state would create a "*Germania Irredenta*," thus planting "the seed of a future war." He questioned whether any of the Allied Great Powers would be "willing to make war to uphold such a settlement." The French diplomat, Jules Cambon—brother of Paul—had chaired the Polish territorial committee. Along with Clemenceau, he took issue with Lloyd George's analysis. The French argument was that the new state must have the resources and communications network necessary for it to survive.<sup>141</sup> A compromise resulted. Poland received nearly all of Posen—a former Prussian province—and a corridor to the Baltic Sea separating East Prussia from the rest of Germany. But the key port city of Danzig was internationalised and placed under League jurisdiction, and plebiscites were to determine the attribution of the key strategic area of Marienwerder as well as coal-rich Upper Silesia.<sup>142</sup> Poland nonetheless emerged from the Peace Conference as a major regional Power. French negotiators were therefore generally successful in their quest to build a potentially strong anti-German coalition stretching from the Baltic to the Adriatic.

Settling Germany's frontiers in the west provoked acute confrontations between France and both Britain and America. Clemenceau tightly controlled French policy on this question, with decisive input only from Tardieu and Aubert. Their strategy was to demand an autonomous Rhineland buffer, expecting that it would raise British and American objections. French negotiators would then demonstrate flexibility and renounce the demand for a strategic buffer to secure their ultimate aim: Anglo-American participation in a trans-Atlantic alliance to protect France from future German aggression. Repeated references to the importance of political and cultural ties uniting France, Britain, and America in documentation generated by the French

Delegation pointed the direction of French policy and the terrain upon which compromise was expected.

The initial French position was staked out in a memorandum by Marshal Foch circulated to Allied leaders on 10 January 1919. Foch again proposed that the Left Bank be reconstituted into one or more neutral states under permanent Allied and United States occupation, the new polities incorporated into a common customs regime with the “states of the West” with which they might eventually opt “to attach themselves as they had in the past.” Interestingly, however, Tardieu had re-drafted key sections of Foch’s original version to insert a series of passages emphasising the ideological affinities of the “states of the west” and the importance of “co-operation amongst the world’s great democracies.”<sup>143</sup> Significantly, Tardieu’s alterations reflected the influence of an earlier note of 2 January in which Aubert argued that French policy must represent the Rhine as “the natural frontier between the democracies of the North Atlantic and Germany.”<sup>144</sup>

Tardieu, together with Aubert, drafted the lengthy “Rhineland memorandum” forwarded as the “definitive statement of France’s policy” to the Council of Ten on 25 February. The text of this document contains 15 specific references to the “western democracies” as a distinct political and cultural community. An autonomous Rhineland under Allied occupation would function as the “frontier of liberty” protecting the “democracies of the West” from German predations.<sup>145</sup> In conversations with British and American officials, Tardieu stressed the extent to which the Clemenceau government’s approach differed from former practices. He characterised it as a “liberal solution” that departed from “traditional solutions of the past.”<sup>146</sup>

British officials interpreted French plans to transform the European equilibrium as incompatible with both Britain’s strategic interests and prospects for a lasting peace. They had been aware of French plans for the Rhineland since at least early 1916. Curzon was only the most voluble of a group of British policy makers who feared a French project to dominate Europe. Lloyd George’s private secretary, Philip Kerr, urged that France’s Rhineland programme be “resisted to the end.” Balfour, criticising French designs on the Left Bank before the House of Commons in late 1917, lamented that French policy was inspired by a “lurid picture of Franco-German relations.” What was needed, he judged in 1919, was a fundamental change in the basis of international politics:

... if international relations and international methods are, as the French assume, going to remain in the future what they have been in the past ... no manipulation of the Rhine frontier is going to make France anything more than a second-rate power, trembling at the nod of its great neighbours to the East and depending from day to day on the changes and chances of a shifting diplomacy and uncertain alliances.<sup>147</sup>

Lloyd George, for his part, resolved to oppose not only any alteration to the status of the Left Bank, but also any Allied occupation of that territory. Moreover, he was convinced that Clemenceau's government could be persuaded to renounce its position by the right inducements from London and Washington.

The prime minister's conviction was well founded. Whilst the "Rhineland memorandum" was France's official negotiating position, Clemenceau and his team doubted that it could be sustained in the negotiations to come. They remained highly sceptical of military intelligence reports that Rhinelanders desired a closer relationship with France. Tardieu and Aubert pointed to other evidence suggesting strongly that the region's population overwhelmingly considered itself German and saw its future with the Reich rather than with France.<sup>148</sup> Aubert outlined the implications of this state of affairs for French policy during the first days of March 1919. He began by observing, "[m]oral arguments based on self-determination have little force in relation to the immediate status of the Rhineland."<sup>149</sup> He then cast further doubt on the power of the French case, emphasising that post-Armistice Germany was militarily weak and mired in political chaos. "We must recognise," Aubert began,

that for the moment the danger of a resurgence of the German peril is assuming an ever more academic character that does not justify great political decisions such as the permanent detachment of five million Germans on the Left Bank.

He then observed, crucially, "Our allies can, with a strong case, offer us a substitute in the form of an alliance." If such an offer arose, he advised, French negotiators "would be wise to acknowledge the temporary character of our case for a watch on the Rhine ... and argue instead for an occupation lasting as long as Germany remains a threat." Aubert submitted that a strategic commitment from Britain and America was preferable to political isolation that would come with a permanent occupation of an autonomous Rhineland.

Aubert's analysis reflected thinking within Clemenceau's inner circle. The premier and his advisors anticipated that Britain and America would offer France a military commitment of some kind. What is more, they dropped clear hints that such an offer would find favour. In early December, Jean Monnet, Clemenceau's *protégé* at the Commerce Ministry posted to London, intimated to an American Treasury official that France would make extensive territorial demands unless it received some sort of Anglo-American guarantee against a future German attack.<sup>150</sup> In conversations with British delegates at the end of February, Tardieu made clear that his government was "ready to consider anything which the Allies thought reasonable." The crucial consideration was closing the Left Bank for all time to the German military.<sup>151</sup> Tardieu went even further in conversations with House on 23 February,

suggesting that an Allied occupation of the Rhineland need not be permanent. He declared that there would be no necessity for such a regime if Germany did not pose a threat “in five, ten or some other number of years.”<sup>152</sup> He offered the same set of observations to British and American officials, Kerr and Sidney Mezes, on 11 and 12 March.<sup>153</sup> Tardieu subsequently admitted to French parliamentary officials that the “Rhineland memorandum” had been an “instrument of discussion” prepared under circumstances in which “France had no peacetime commitment from its allies.”<sup>154</sup>

These various hints convinced Lloyd George that Clemenceau’s government was “not really behind” its Rhineland proposal.<sup>155</sup> His Cabinet agreed to propose joint Anglo-American military guarantees as substitutes for French demands for a strategic Rhineland buffer. Wilson, who would have been receiving similar information from Tardieu’s American interlocutors, accepted the idea of a joint Anglo-American offer of military assistance in the event of unprovoked aggression. The offer was made to Clemenceau on 14 March. The French anticipated such an offer and responded quickly. “We must choose,” Clemenceau stated in meeting with his inner circle on that evening, “either France alone on the Left Bank” or “America and Britain allied to us.” By the following morning, all agreed that the guarantee offer was impossible to refuse.<sup>156</sup> It seemed that the Clemenceau government had achieved its aim of a North Atlantic alliance including Britain and America.

The Anglo-American guarantee offer was highly innovative and marked a dramatic departure from long-standing traditions in British foreign policy. Lloyd George later specified that Britain would “place all our forces at [France’s] disposal” in the event of unprovoked German aggression. He further undertook to begin construction of a Channel Tunnel to expedite military assistance.<sup>157</sup> Tough negotiations remained. Tardieu and Pichon drafted a note accepting the Anglo-American proposition but demanded a range of supplementary guarantees including a thirty-year occupation, a link between the occupation and reparations payments, and the permanent demilitarisation of the Left Bank as well as a 50 kilometre-wide strip of territory on the Right Bank. The final details of the proposed guarantee treaty were not finalised for another month.<sup>158</sup>

## VII

It was at this point, in the midst of talks over the details of the guarantee, that Lloyd George professed to have second thoughts about the entire nature of the settlement with Germany. On 22 March, he invited several of his closest advisors to join him at Fontainebleau, near Paris. The purpose was to reflect on the terms that were emerging and outline a coherent British position. The result was the “Fontainebleau Memorandum,” distributed to the Council of Four on 25 March. The document was a sustained plea for more lenient terms for Germany. It warned that the German population

would not accept a harsh peace and predicted its leaders would refuse to sign the treaty as it was taking shape. It also argued against a punitive economic regime for Germany and, in contrast to the position the British had taken in February, now rejected a reparations settlement that would punish future generations for Germany's role in the war. A harsh settlement would render Germany vulnerable to the siren call of Bolshevik revolution. Finally, the Memorandum warned against territorial adjustments that left large numbers of Germans under Polish or Czechoslovak rule. It concluded by warning that the punishing peace envisaged by the Allies would be very difficult to enforce and sow the seeds of future conflict.<sup>159</sup>

The British position provoked a robust French reaction. Tardieu drafted the official response. Arguing that the British exaggerated the danger of the Germans not signing the peace treaty, he also underlined the hypocrisy in the British position. Britain had already obtained its core strategic aims: Germany's High Seas fleet scuttled, its colonies occupied, and much of its merchant fleet handed over to the British. Germany's strategic advantages over France, meanwhile, remained intact. "This fact seems to have escaped M. Lloyd George's analysis," Tardieu observed. Germany's enduring industrial and demographic advantage underpinned the need for viable states to Germany's east. These "new states" must be capable of resisting the spread of Bolshevism whilst providing counter-weight to German military potential.<sup>160</sup> Clemenceau took these arguments up in a sharp exchange with Lloyd George in the Council of Four on 27 March.<sup>161</sup>

The most significant short-term impact of the Fontainebleau Memorandum was the adjustment of the proposed German-Polish frontier. In the longer term, however, the Memorandum illuminated the divergent political and strategic perspectives of the British and French policy establishments for all to see. It also underlined Lloyd George's ambiguous attitude towards France and French security. The premier, and too many other key British officials, failed to understand that any French predominance in Europe at this juncture was artificial and temporary. He aimed to use France's desire for post-war British support as leverage to compel a more moderate French policy towards Germany. The guarantee offer needs understanding in this context. It was a lever for influence over French policy rather than an ironclad commitment to preserve France's security. This was why Lloyd George insisted, successfully, that Britain's guarantee was conditional on American involvement. Antony Lentin has argued that the British prime minister assumed all along that the American Congress would refuse to ratify their guarantee and Britain would retain its entire freedom of action.<sup>162</sup> Whatever the case, there can be no mistaking Lloyd George's growing resolve to distance Britain from questions of European security.



There was no such ambiguity on the part of the French government. Clemenceau invested massive political capital in his effort to sell the benefits of the Anglo-American guarantee to his compatriots. In doing so, he had to face down open insubordination on the part of Foch, a subversive political campaign to overthrow him by Poincaré, and sustained resistance in Parliament and the press through their parliamentary allies. All argued that the Anglo-American guarantees could never replace a permanent position on the Rhine as a reliable foundation of France's security. In making the case for his programme in summer and autumn 1919, both Clemenceau and Tardieu stressed repeatedly that only a trans-Atlantic strategic community of democratic Great Powers would be potent enough to enmesh and constrain German power in the end.<sup>163</sup> History would demonstrate the merits of this argument. Yet there can be no denying that it rested on a misreading of both the United States *and* Britain's willingness to commit to uphold security on the European continent.

As the Paris Peace Conference ended, the Franco-British *entente* was already fraying badly. The *entente* that had weathered the test of war on an unprecedented scale proved unable to cope with the challenges of forging peace. The inescapable conclusion is that Britain was much more important to France in 1919 than France to Britain. Clemenceau's government put aside the cultural baggage of centuries of Franco-British rivalry to attribute a pivotal role to Britain in its planning for post-war peace and security. This policy orientation had strong roots in the pre-war diplomacy of Théophile Delcassé, resting on ideological considerations as well as calculations of the future balance of power. "With its navy, its military potential, its immense economic resources and especially its political culture and fidelity to engagements," observed the French ambassador in London, "Britain is as precious an ally in war-time as its political influence, moral authority and loyalty make it in peace-time."<sup>164</sup> And it endured despite repeated rebuffs from British negotiators as well as persistent evidence of Anglo-American collusion over core issues such as the League, economic security, and Eastern Europe frontiers. Clemenceau's government remained firm that only close co-operation amongst the three great Atlantic democracies could establish a security system capable of containing and enmeshing Germany.

But by the post-armistice period the priorities of the Lloyd George government were already shifting away from the European continent and toward the Empire. The cultural reflexes of British policy elites reasserted themselves with alarming speed as the Great War drew to an unexpected close, with France once again viewed as a chief rival to Britain's global interests. This was particularly the case when it came to British aspirations to dominate the Middle East after the collapse of Ottoman power. The Empire shaped the way

British policy makers understood Britain's role in the world and the way they interpreted its vital interests.

France's peace strategy therefore foundered on the shoals of British refusal to uphold the European settlement without full American participation. The re-emergence of Britain's traditional ambiguity concerning continental affairs should not have surprised policy makers in Paris. The Clemenceau government's concept of a trans-Atlantic security system was ahead of its time. It would take another World War of even greater destructiveness to convince both British and American policy elites of the importance of a strategic commitment on the European continent.

## Notes

- 1 E. Greenhalgh, *Victory through Coalition: Britain and France during the First World War* (Cambridge: 2005); W. J. Philpott, *Anglo-French Relations and Strategy on the Western Front, 1914–1918* (Houndmills: 1996); M. Horn, *Britain, France and the Financing of the First World War* (Montreal: 2002); P. M. H. Bell, *France and Britain, 1900–1940: Entente and Estrangement* (London: 1996); and Arnold Wolfers, *Britain and France between Two Wars: Conflicting Strategies of Peace since Versailles* (New York: 1940).
- 2 On the influence of “Atlanticism” within the British policy elite, see Michael Fry, *Illusions of Security: North Atlantic Diplomacy, 1918–1922* (Toronto: 1972), 7–25; cf. David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century* (London: 1991), 83–107. Amongst scholars who contest the extent and duration of this influence, see B. J. C. McKercher, “No Eternal Friends or Enemies’: British Defence Policy and the Problem of the United States, 1919–1939,” *Canadian Journal of History*, 28 (1993): 257–93; John Ferris, *The Evolution of British Strategic Policy, 1919–1926* (London: 1987).
- 3 Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-determination and the International Origins of Anti-Colonial Nationalism* (Oxford: 2007); Carl Bouchard, *Cher Monsieur le Président: Quand les français écrivaient à Woodrow Wilson, 1918–1919* (Paris: 2015); and Pierre Miquel, *La Paix de Versailles et l'opinion publique française* (Paris: 1972), 9–36.
- 4 J. M. Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (New York: 1920), 32, 56.
- 5 Antony Lentin, “A Comment,” in M. Boemke, G. Feldman, and E. Glaser, eds., *The Treaty of Versailles: A Reassessment after 75 Years* (Cambridge: 1998), 229. Amongst those who adopt core aspects of Keynes's interpretation, see Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919* (New York: 2001), 29–32, 157–203; Robert and Isabelle Tombs, *That Sweet Enemy: The French and the British from the Sun King to the Present* (London: 2006), 506–07; P. M. H. Bell, *Entente and Estrangement: Franco-British Relations, 1900–1940* (London: 1996), 110–19, 157–203; Patrick Cohrs, *The Unfinished Peace after World War I: America, Britain and the Stabilisation of Europe, 1919–1932* (Cambridge: 2006), 48–51; Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking in Paris, 1919* (London: 1994), 188–94; Robert Boyce, *The Great Inter-War Crisis and the Collapse of Capitalism* (London: 2009), 23–74. Notable exceptions are David Watson, *Clemenceau: A Political Biography* (London: 1972), an excellent biography; Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order* (London: 2015). Excellent assessments of the historiography up to the late 1990s are William

- R. Keylor, "Versailles and International Diplomacy," and D. Stevenson, "French War Aims and Peace Planning," both in Boemke et al., *Treaty of Versailles*, 87–109, 469–505.
- 6 J.-B. Duroselle, *Clemenceau* (Paris: 1988), 720–73; idem., *La Grande Guerre des français* (Paris: 1994); J.-J. Becker, *Clemenceau chef de guerre* (Paris: 2012), 143, 152–63; Jean-Noël Jeanneney, *Clemenceau: dernières nouvelles du Tigre* (Paris: 2016), especially 180–82; George-Henri Soutou, *La Grande illusion: quand la France perdait la paix* (Paris: 2015); Vincent Laniol, "Entrer en paix? Dynamiques internationales et phases préparatoire de la Conférence de la Paix opinions, images de l'ennemi et dissensions interalliées, 4 octobre 1918–18 janvier 1919" (PhD dissertation, Université de Paris I–Panthéon Sorbonne, 2015). The literature in German is closer to that in French. See, amongst others, Jörn Leonhard, *Der überforderte Frieden: Versailles und die Welt 1918–1923* (Berlin: 2018); and Eckhart Conze, *Die große Illusion: Versailles 1919 und die Neuordnung der Welt* (Berlin: 2018).
  - 7 Figures from David Stevenson, *Cataclysm: The First World War as Political Tragedy* (New York: 2005), 160–66.
  - 8 Keith Neilson, "Reinforcements and Supplies from Overseas: British Strategic Sealift," in G. Kennedy, ed., *The Merchant Marine in International Affairs, 1850–1950* (London: 2000), 31–58; and Greenhalgh, *Victory through Coalition*, 114–19.
  - 9 Horn, *Financing*, 117–41; and Hew Strachan, *The First World War*, Volume I: *To Arms* (Oxford: 2001), 962–71.
  - 10 Anonymous, "Inter-Allied Economic Organizations in the Course of the World War of 1914–1918," *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics* 16/1 (1940): 8–20. See also George-Henri Soutou, *L'Or et le sang: les buts de guerre économiques de la Première Guerre mondiale* (Paris: 1989), 261–363, the seminal study.
  - 11 Peter Jackson, *Beyond the Balance of Power: France and the Politics of National Security* (Cambridge: 2014), 172–96, 235–44.
  - 12 Martyn Cornick, "The Myth of 'Perfidious Albion' and French national identity" in David Dutton (ed.), *Statecraft and Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (Liverpool, 1995), 7–33.
  - 13 Jules Michelet, *Le peuple* (Paris: 1877 [1846]), 267.
  - 14 Tombs and Tombs, *Sweet Enemy*, especially 438–45.
  - 15 Cf. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT: 1992); Theodore Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism, and the Historical Imagination: Nineteenth-Century Visions of a Greater Britain* (New York: 2011).
  - 16 Macmillan, 1919, 383.
  - 17 Bonaparte to Vice-Admiral Pierre-Charles Villeneuve, *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, Volume II (Paris: 1858), 51–52.
  - 18 Quoted in C. M. Andrew, *Théophile Delcassé and the Making of the Entente Cordiale: Reappraisal of French Foreign Policy 1898–1905* (London, New York: 1968), 116.
  - 19 Emily Haire, "Franco-British Intelligence Liaison, 1909–1940" (PhD dissertation, Queen's University, Belfast, 2014), 69–111; Horn, *Financing*, 117–41; Philpott, *Anglo-French Strategic Relations*; and Greenhalgh, *Victory through Coalition*.
  - 20 Dockrill, *British Establishment Perspectives on France, 1936–40* (London: 1999), 2.
  - 21 Hardinge memorandum, n.d., endorsed by Curzon, 1 May 1920, FO [Foreign Office Records, The National Archives, Kew] 3765/187041. Hardinge soon became Britain's ambassador to France.
  - 22 Tyrrell and Paget memorandum, "Suggested Basis for a Territorial Settlement in Europe," 7 August 1916, FO 371/2804.

- 23 George Egerton, *Great Britain and the Creation of the League of Nations* (Chapel Hill, NC: 1978); Peter Yearwood, *A Guarantee of Peace: the League of Nations in British Policy, 1914–1925* (Oxford: 2009); and Gaynor Johnson, *Lord Robert Cecil: Politician and Internationalist* (London: 2013).
- 24 The imperial character of British war aims emerges clearly in Michael Fry, *And Fortune Fled: David Lloyd George, The First Democratic Statesman* (New York: 2011), 54–223, a detailed analysis of his government. Also see E. Goldstein, *Winning the Peace: British Diplomatic Strategy, Peace Planning and the Paris Peace Conference, 1916–1920* (Oxford: 1991), 104–62; M. Dockrill and J. D. Goold, *Peace Without Promise: Britain and the Peace Conferences, 1919–1923* (Hamden, CT: 1981), 17–29.
- 25 Tyrrell and Paget, “Suggested Basis.”
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- 27 See the powerful analysis in Tooze, *Deluge*, 288–96.
- 28 Goldstein, *Winning the Peace*, 103.
- 29 Carl Bouchard, *Le citoyen et l’ordre mondial (1914–1918): le rêve d’une paix durable au lendemain de la Grande Guerre* (Paris: 2008); and Jean-Michel Guieu, *Le rameau et le glaive: les militants français pour la Société des Nations* (Paris: 2008).
- 30 V. Huguet, *L’intervention militaire britannique en 1914* (Paris: 1928), 240–41, 245–46.
- 31 A. Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery: France’s Bid for Power in Europe, 1914–1940* (London: 1995), 76.
- 32 8 April 1900, P. Cambon, *Correspondence, 1870–1924*, Volume II (Paris: 1940–1946), 44.
- 33 David Watson, *Georges Clemenceau: France* (London: 2008), 331–43; Duroselle, *Clemenceau*, 720–31.
- 34 Ribot to Jusserand [French ambassador, Washington], 15 April 1917, Tardieu [Papiers André Tardieu, Papiers d’agents–Archives privées, Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Paris] MAE PA-AP Volume 112, 166; on Tardieu, see especially G. Puaux et al., *André Tardieu* (Paris: 1957); F. Monnet, *Refaire la république: André Tardieu, une dérive réactionnaire, 1876–1945* (Paris: 1993).
- 35 Soutou, *Grande Illusion*, 12–31; Jackson, *Beyond the Balance*, 226–32; and Laniol, “Entrer en paix?,” 184–231.
- 36 Marie-Christine Kessler and Guy Rousseau, eds., *Etienne Clémentel (1864–1936). Politique et action publique sous la Troisième République* (Brussels: 2018); Clotilde Druelle-Korn, “De la pensée à l’action économique: Etienne Clémentel (1864–1936), un ministre visionnaire,” in *Dossier: la culture économique des hommes politiques à l’épreuve du pouvoir*, ed., Sabine Jansen in *Histoire@Politique*, 16/1(2012).
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- 38 Aubert “Note” for Tardieu, Berthelot, and Pichon, 22 December 1918, MAE Série A (Paix) Volume 289; on Aubert’s role, Tardieu MAE PA-AP 166 Volume 112; “Fonctionnement de la mission,” n.d. [but October 1918], Tardieu-Aubert from October to December 1918, both *ibid.*, Volume 132. See also André Tardieu, *La paix* (Paris: 1921), 94–109.
- 39 Watson, *Clemenceau*; Duroselle, *Clemenceau*; Robert Hanks, “Culture versus Diplomacy: Clemenceau, Anglo-American Relations and the First World War” (PhD

- dissertation, University of Toronto, 2002); and the excellent sketch in D. Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall: Victory and Defeat in 1918* (London: 2011), 494–97.
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  - 41 Government of France, *Journal officiel de la République française*, Chambre des députés, *Débats parlementaires* [hereafter *JO*, Chambre, *Débats*] première séance, 29 décembre 1918.
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  - 45 Daniel Norman, “Des limites d’État aux frontières nationales,” in P. Nora, ed., *Les Lieux de mémoire*, vol. I (Paris: 1997), 1125–46; and Jackson, *Beyond the Balance*, 52–56, 123–27, 210–14.
  - 46 On French aims in Armistice negotiations, see Stevenson, *French War Aims*, 111–30; and Jackson, *Beyond the Balance*, 189–201.
  - 47 “Congrès de la paix: plan général,” 5 January 1919, Tardieu MAE PA-AP 166 Volume 412; and Tardieu, *La paix*, 97–101.
  - 48 “De la future frontière,” “Du sort de l’Allemagne unifiée,” both 11 November 1918, MAE Série A (Paix) Volume 60; see also, “Deux notes de M. Hanotaux,” n.d., Tardieu MAE PA-AP 166 Volume 417.
  - 49 “La frontière de l’Alsace-Lorraine et le statut de la rive gauche du Rhin,” 1 November 1918, MAE Série A (Paix) Volume 289.
  - 50 [Berthelot] “Note sur la future frontière,” 10 November 1918, MAE Série A (Paix) Volume 289; [Cambon] “Conditions de paix,” 21 November 1918, MAE Série Z (Europe 1918–1940) Grande Bretagne Volume 36.
  - 51 “Note sure les règlements de la paix,” 23 December 1918, Pichon [Papiers Stephen Pichon, Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Paris] MAE PA-AP 141 Volume 6; cf. the observations on the “artificial” political character of German in Hanotaux, “Du sort de l’Allemagne unifiée,” 11 November 1918, MAE Série A (Paix), Volume 60.
  - 52 “Note sur l’organisation des provinces Rhénanes,” 26 January 1919, Tardieu MAE PA-AP 166 Volume 417.
  - 53 “Étude sur le regime futur des pays de la rive gauche du Rhin,” 17 November 1918, “Le Rhin frontière militaire,” 3 December 1918, “Note sur la Rive gauche du Rhin: Importance que lui ont attribuée les allemands—rôle qu’elle a joué en 1870 et en 1914,” n.d., “Note sur l’organisation militaire des pays de la Rive gauche du Rhin,” 19 December 1918, all SHD-DAT [Service historique de la Défense—Département de l’armée de terre, Vincennes] Series 1918–1940 4N 92.
  - 54 “Note,” 27 November 1918 [forwarded to Clemenceau on 28 November], Clemenceau [Fonds Clemenceau, Service historique de la Défense—Département de l’armée de terre, Vincennes] SHD-DAT 6N 73-2. Foch outlined this argument to Lloyd George during a visit to London on 1 December 1918: see “Conversation entre M. Lloyd George et le maréchal Foch, 10 Downing Street,” ibid.

- 55 Cambon to Pichon, 15 November 1918, Pichon [Correspondence Stephen Pichon, Institut de France, Paris] MS 4396, pièce 150; Balfour to Lloyd George, 29 November 1918, LG [Earl Lloyd George Papers, Parliamentary Archives, London] F/3/3/35.
- 56 J. Bariéty, "France and the Politics of Steel, 1919–1926," in R. Boyce, ed., *French Foreign and Defence Policy, 1918–1940: The Decline and Fall of a Great Power* (London, New York: 1998), 33–35; and Soutou, *L'Or*, 801–02.
- 57 "Note sur la future frontière entre l'Alsace-Lorraine et l'Allemagne: raisons stratégiques, économiques et politiques," 10 November 1918, MAE Série A (Paix) Volume 289; cf. Jacques Bariéty, *Les relations franco-allemandes après la Première Guerre mondiale* (Paris: 1977), 126–71.
- 58 "Question du charbon," 30 November 1918, MAE Série A (Paix) Volume 59; G.-H. Soutou, "Le Coke dans les relations internationales en Europe de 1914 au plan Dawes," *Relations Internationales*, 43 (1985): 249–67; Jackson, *Beyond the Balance*, 258–62; Françoise Berger, "Les relations entre les sidérurgies française et allemande de 1870 à la CECA," *Revue d'Allemagne et des Pays de langue allemande* 39/2 (2007): 163–99.
- 59 "La frontière de l'Alsace-Lorraine et le statut de la rive gauche du Rhin," 1 November 1918, MAE Série A (Paix) Volume 289; "Question du charbon," 30 November 1918, *ibid.*, vol. 59. See also Soutou, *L'Or*, 779–80.
- 60 "Principales questions d'ordre économique dont le ministère de commerce aura à se préoccuper lors de la conclusion du traité du paix," n.d. [but August 1918], AN [Archives National, Paris] Série F12 8106.
- 61 Clémentel to Clemenceau, 19 September 1918, AN F12 8104; "Clauses économiques des préliminaires de paix: principes généraux," Foreign Ministry summary of Commerce Ministry proposals, n.d. [but early January 1918], MAE, Série A (Paix) Volume 59.
- 62 Clémentel to Clemenceau, 19 September 1918, "Réunion chez le Président du conseil de MM. Clémentel, Pichon and Tardieu," 28 September 1918, Clémentel to Clemenceau, 31 December 1918, all AN F12 8104; "Clauses économiques des préliminaires de paix: principes généraux," n.d. [but early January 1918], MAE Série A (Paix) Volume 59.
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